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ABSTRACT

While Aristotle treats the nature of rhetoric as philosophical, political/practical, and artistic/technical, Confucius views language use as philosophical and political/practical but not as artistic/technical, with the result that Confucius does not seem to offer as much as Aristotle does. In their essay "Refiguring Rhetoric as an Art: Aristotle's Concept of 'Techne'" Janet Atwill and Janice Lauer argue that rhetoric should be viewed as a triadic domain instead of a dichotomous one. To Aristotle rhetoric is a theoretical, practical, and productive discipline of study. In "Analects," a collection of Confucius' teaching recorded by his students, Confucius' concept of language use, or his rhetoric, has an important theoretical/practical dimension with some possibility of a productive component. In ancient Chinese thinking, Heaven does not necessarily or completely exist prior to the human realm but is created as the human realm is created, so that for Confucius the separation of a philosophical component and a practical component cannot exist, for Heaven and man depend on each other to make the Way/the Tao. In cross-cultural studies, presumed "deficiencies" in rhetoric deserve scrutiny because it is difficult for a person to escape the limitations of his or her conceptual framework and underlying assumptions. More studies need to be done on cultural differences, for example, on ideas that the West has and the Chinese do not, so that a dialog between the similarities and differences can yield more understanding. (Contains 15 references and three illustrations.) (NKA)

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ED 421 715

Rhetorical Invention and Cultural Diversity
A Historical Approach: Aristotle and Confucius 1

George Kennedy's recent important book *Comparative Rhetoric* argues for the universality of rhetoric and this challenges us to explain and understand differences among rhetorical practices. This challenge means that we must candidly examine the inherently interdependent relationship between differences and similarities, between universality and diversity.

It is impossible to take on this latter, the relation between the different and the universal, in one paper, but here I would like to examine one of these important differences and its significance. While Aristotle treats the nature of rhetoric as philosophical, political/practical, and artistic/technical, Confucius views language-use as philosophical and political/practical but not as artistic/technical as Aristotle does. Therefore, Confucius does not seem to offer us as much as Aristotle does. In showing this difference, I wish to show not so much the existence of both similarities and differences among cultures as the intricate ways in which similarities and differences are intertwined. As my discussion will show that inquiry into these complex relations is necessarily a multidisciplinary challenge but, as I will argue, it is also indispensable to our understanding of the other and thus to our commitment to diversity.

For my purpose, I need to set up Aristotle, but I'll do it quickly so that I can get to a more careful analysis of Confucius. For a well-developed argument for Aristotle's demarcation of these three domains of knowledge--philosophical, practical, and artistic--I recommend Janet Atwill and Janice Lauer's essay "Refiguring Rhetoric as an Art: Aristotle's Concept of Techne" [illustration

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1]. (This illustration gives you an example of how complex their argument is.) In their essay, Atwill and Lauer first focus on William Grimaldi as an interpreter of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as philosophical, then E. M. Cope and George Kennedy as interpreters of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as practical. Recognizing the limitations of keeping rhetoric "within this theory/practice opposition," Atwill and Lauer argue that rhetoric should be viewed as a triadic domain instead of a dichotomous one. In other words, to Aristotle, rhetoric is a theoretical, practical, and productive discipline of study.

My caparison and contrast of Aristotle and Confucius today will be based on this triadic view of rhetoric; further, it will also be based on the connections of the three domains. These connections can be seen in Aristotle's Chapter VI of *Nicomachean Ethics* [illustration 2]. As indicated by the arrows in this illustration, Aristotle uses the word *truth* as a goal for both scientific and practical knowledge, thus a shared characteristic between the two; he uses the word *reasoned* for both practical and productive nature of rhetoric, and he uses the concept of productiveness for all the three. All three, in other words, are inventive, although producing different kinds of knowledge. Both the three domains and these connections among them are important in the following discussion.

The *Analects*, a collection of Confucius' teaching recorded by his students, has twenty chapters and is considered the only works by Confucius. Based on the *Analects*, I argue that Confucius' concept of language use, or his rhetoric, has an important theoretical/practical dimension with some possibility of a productive component. In studying classical Chinese, it is very useful to understand that in ancient Chinese thinking, Heaven does not necessarily or

completely exist prior to the human realm but is created as the human realm is created. On the one hand, this Chinese view of the world makes impossible the view that language mimics reality because a transcendent truth which requires a prior heaven does not exist in the sense Truth does for many in the West. On the other hand, this also makes the theoretical and practical components of rhetoric indistinguishable. To Confucius, in other words, the separation of a philosophical component and a practical component cannot exist; for Heaven and man depend on each other to make the Way / the Tao. Interestingly enough, however, here Confucius is not completely unlike Aristotle. For, as pointed out above, truth--as in truth or falsity of necessity and as in good or bad in accordance with right desire--connects the theoretical and the practical realms of knowledge for Aristotle as well as for Confucius.

Now, rhetoric as a practical means for the social realm. As my summary of the *Analects* indicates, language use to Confucius is indeed, as George Kennedy says in his *Comparative Rhetoric*, a form of energy that results in action, a kind of practical knowledge.

Several times in the *Analects* (e.g., 13.15; 15.24; 17.8), the noun *word(s)* is used interchangeably with the noun *virtue(s)*, so much so that Confucius has to distinguish the two. He says, "A virtuous person must have the words; a person who has the words is not necessarily virtuous" (14.4). As pointed out by Herbert Fingarette, Confucius' language plays a role that is similar to J. L. Austin's "performative utterance" or Kennedy Burke's "symbolic action." in other words, language use and virtuous act are sometimes identifiable to Confucius.

Such a rhetoric definitely resembles both the statesman/orator and the handbook traditions that view rhetoric as practical knowledge. Language is instrumental both to the state affairs and

to communication efficiency: it shapes the state as orators/statesmen see fit or good for people in general through regulating the communication situations and practice. It is important, however, to go one step further in this conclusion about Confucius' view of language use. In his book *Disputers of the Tao*, A. C. Graham distinguishes Confucius' view of proper conduct from Western conceptions of good manners. In other words, Confucius' emphasis on ritualistic behavior is not just good manners equivalent to the statesman tradition of rhetoric in the West, but there is a sacredness similar to the Western philosophical dimension of rhetoric . Further, like practical knowledge in Aristotle, Confucian rituals are an end in themselves and are good for people in general; unlike Aristotle's practical knowledge where man is the origin of an action, Confucius' sacred rituals are independent of the wills of individuals, the significance of which will be addressed later in this paper. So far, Confucius' rhetoric encompasses and collapses the binaries of theory and practice. Is it, though, a productive rhetoric? According to Atwill and Lauer, Aristotle's rhetoric as a productive art is a means to inventing new cultural valuations. Confucius, in contrast, focuses almost exclusively on buttressing the traditional value. Can his teaching help in inventing new cultural valuations? Confucius says himself that he is merely a transmitter, not a creator, of traditions (7.1). Arguments, however, have been made, somewhat convincingly, regarding this issue.

On the one hand, in Confucius' use of language itself, new concepts were indeed made. Here and there in the *Analects*, Confucius has also left us with some clues to the role of language use in his process of creation. Despite his emphasis on the importance of correct ways and names, Confucius says very explicitly twice in the *Analects* that appropriateness is the most basic

principle guiding the use of general rules and general principles--even to the extent of changing the old rules (1.12 & 4.10 illustration 3). He uses this basic principle also when he discusses the relationship between content and style (6.18. illustration 3). More importantly, he specifically instructs his students in the *Analects* that as students they must want to learn and must be aware of puzzlement and difficulties enough to want to ask questions (7.8 illustration 3) and even to challenge the knowledge being taught (11.4 illustration 3). Here, it seems that the teaching and learning process can indeed be more dynamic and inventive than mere transmission. All of this indicates that to Confucius, education in general and language use in particular, when done right, can lead to new knowledge, produce new names and cultural valuations. Confucius' rhetoric, therefore, can play a role in inventing a modern Chinese democracy.

On the other hand, perhaps partly because Confucius does not have other works for us to turn to, other works as Aristotle has such as *Nicomachean Ethics* that I turned to earlier in this presentation, how this productive process works and what the rationale for this process is remain, by and large, a mystery. Furthermore, because China indeed had never had a democratic political system, it would be difficult to argue that Confucius had a rhetoric that was as democratic--and therefore productive--as Atwill and Lauer have argued for Aristotle's rhetoric. As Richard Enos argues rather convincingly in his two historiographic studies of Greek and Roman rhetoric, genuinely practical, productive, even theoretical rhetoric cannot survive despotism. Therefore, I believe that Confucius' rhetoric may have the potential but is not nearly as well developed to be instrumental for a [radical] modern Chinese democracy as Aristotle's may be for the West. Finally, as Fingarette observes, Confucius' cultural rituals and practices are independent of the

individuals' wills; therefore, Confucius' view of individuals as language-using agents cannot grant them much independent consequences. Confucius' rhetoric as productive knowledge in inventing new cultural valuations, then, is somewhat limited.

My first point here is that despite important similarities, differences do exist, as shown in this case that Confucius simply does not offer the productive/crafty view of language-use as much as Aristotle does. My next question is: How significant is this difference between Aristotle and Confucius to our studies in comparative and contrastive rhetoric? I hope that it will prompt us to give a little more attention to the study of some genuine differences, even presumed deficiencies. Indeed, important studies of cultural similarities have been done. For example, Confucius has been interpreted as having the self at the very center of his teaching of the human relations (Tu). Also, Confucius has also been appropriated into a deconstructioner whose use of language has no referents (Ames and Hall). These and other interpretations of the similarities between the Confucian and certain Western thought systems are invaluable. At the same time, however, more studies need to be done on cultural differences, for example on ideas that West has and the Chinese do not, so that we can benefit from a even more complex understanding of both cultures as a result of the dialogue between the similarities and differences.

Why should we examine presumed deficiencies? I believe that, especially in cross cultural studies, these "deficiencies" deserve particularly careful scrutiny because it is difficult to escape the limitations of our own conceptual framework and underlying assumptions that we have been trained to take for granted. Initially, for example, Confucius' system looks non-creative and therefore does not encourage individual originality. However, in admitting that Confucius'

system has only a limited inventive, productive, and therefore rhetorical dimension, we may then proceed and discover a rather different view about creativity and originality as the West knows it. Let me briefly mention two different interpretations of this lack of creativity issue. Herbert Fingarette, author of *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, says:

> Confucius does not elaborate the language of choice and responsibility as these are intimately intertwined with the idea of the ontologically ultimate power of the individual to select from genuine alternatives to create his own spiritual destiny, and with the related ideas of spiritual guilt, and repentance or retribution for such guilt.
>
> (18)

Fingarette sees in Confucius' lack of individual independence an alternative to Aristotle's concept of moral ethics, in which "man is the origin of action" (illustration 2). In Confucius, individuals do not bare the burden of a guilt ridden conscience as much as the collective does. This puts more emphasis on what one has made of oneself in the cultural environment than where one is from. This social dimension of Confucius' teaching has its implications in teaching composition has been explored by others, for example Matalene & Jolliffe.

Another interpretation can be found in Joseph Dunne's *Back to the Rough Ground: 'Phronesis' and "Techne' in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle*. Dunne sees in Confucius' lack of desire to produce a challenge to what he describes as "a powerful fascination for the Greeks--i.e., the experience of successful fabrication in various crafts" (see 250-51). This is the tendency produce, and to produce, and to produce more, the Fustian ambition, and a phenomenon that many in the West do not always look at without some scruple. In this light, examining the lack of

the productive edge on Confucius' part reveals that a presumable deficiency may not be a total deficiency; instead, it leads us to intriguing issues, useful questions, and genuinely new and different perspectives, questions such as: to what extent does Confucius help / hinder the development of the Chinese culture, and to what extent is Confucius' thought [un]helpful to today's multi-cultural effort in the US? Obviously, also, until we study both the similarities and differences, our understanding of Chinese students' writing process will be limited.

My second point, therefore, is that once we can see these differences, we may discover new perspectives, thus allowing diversity. In this case, for example, not as productive/technical may be a weakness on Confucius' part, but at the same time it has also helped strengthen the Confucian culture in avoiding a powerful fascination with productivity of technology and in allowing us a discursive pattern that is not all a linear progress towards a telos. In composition / rhetoric studies, obviously, this means an alternative view of style, which is often viewed as an expression of the individual or of "the man." Conceptually, it also enriches our understanding of the creativity, originality: rhetorical invention.

My conclusion is that well-meaning appropriations according to the modern thought or the Other's thought nevertheless negate genuine differences, and negating these genuine differences, ultimately, is negating diversity and modern democracy. We should, therefore, be careful with similarities and differences, not taking on a universalist or a cultural relativist stance towards a cultural phenomenon before we have examined it carefully. Further, we should examine both what we see and what we do not see. After all, the Chinese Taoists are far from the only ones who believe that void is not always a bad thing.

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ILLUSTRATION I

Refiguring Rhetoric as an Art: Aristotle's Concept of techne
Janet Atwill and Janice Lauer

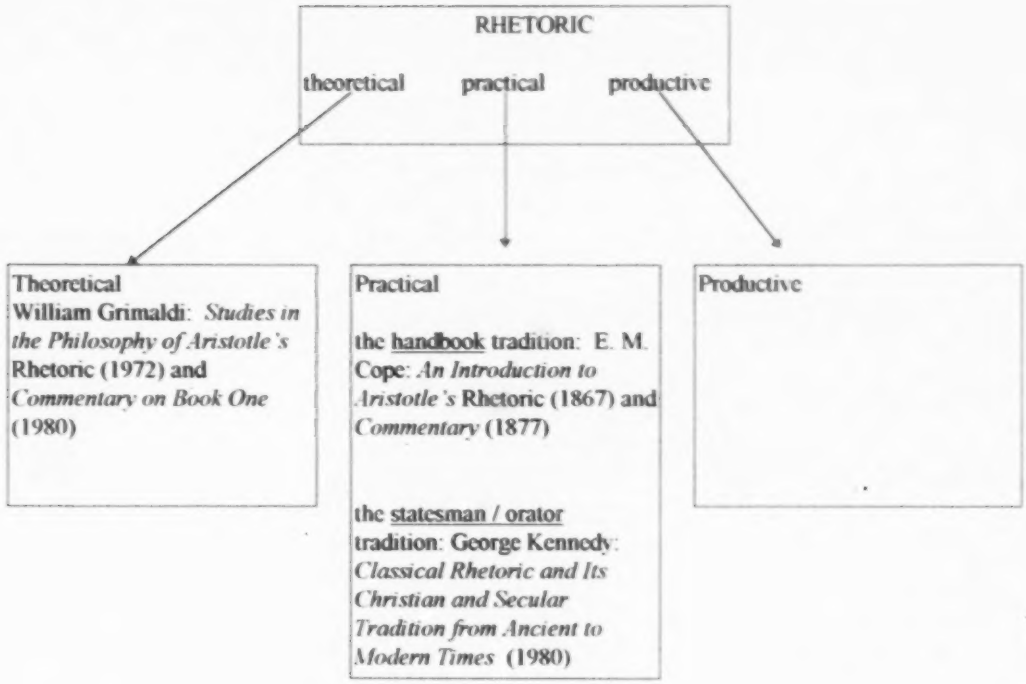
RHETORIC
theoretical
practical
productive
Theoretical
William Grimaldi: *Studies in the Philosophy of Aristotle's* Rhetoric (1972) and *Commentary on Book One* (1980)
Practical
the handbook tradition: E. M. Cope: *An Introduction to Aristotle's* Rhetoric (1867) and *Commentary* (1877)
the statesman / orator tradition: George Kennedy: *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (1980)
Productive

ILLUSTRATION II

NICOMACHEAN ETHICS
ARISTOTLE

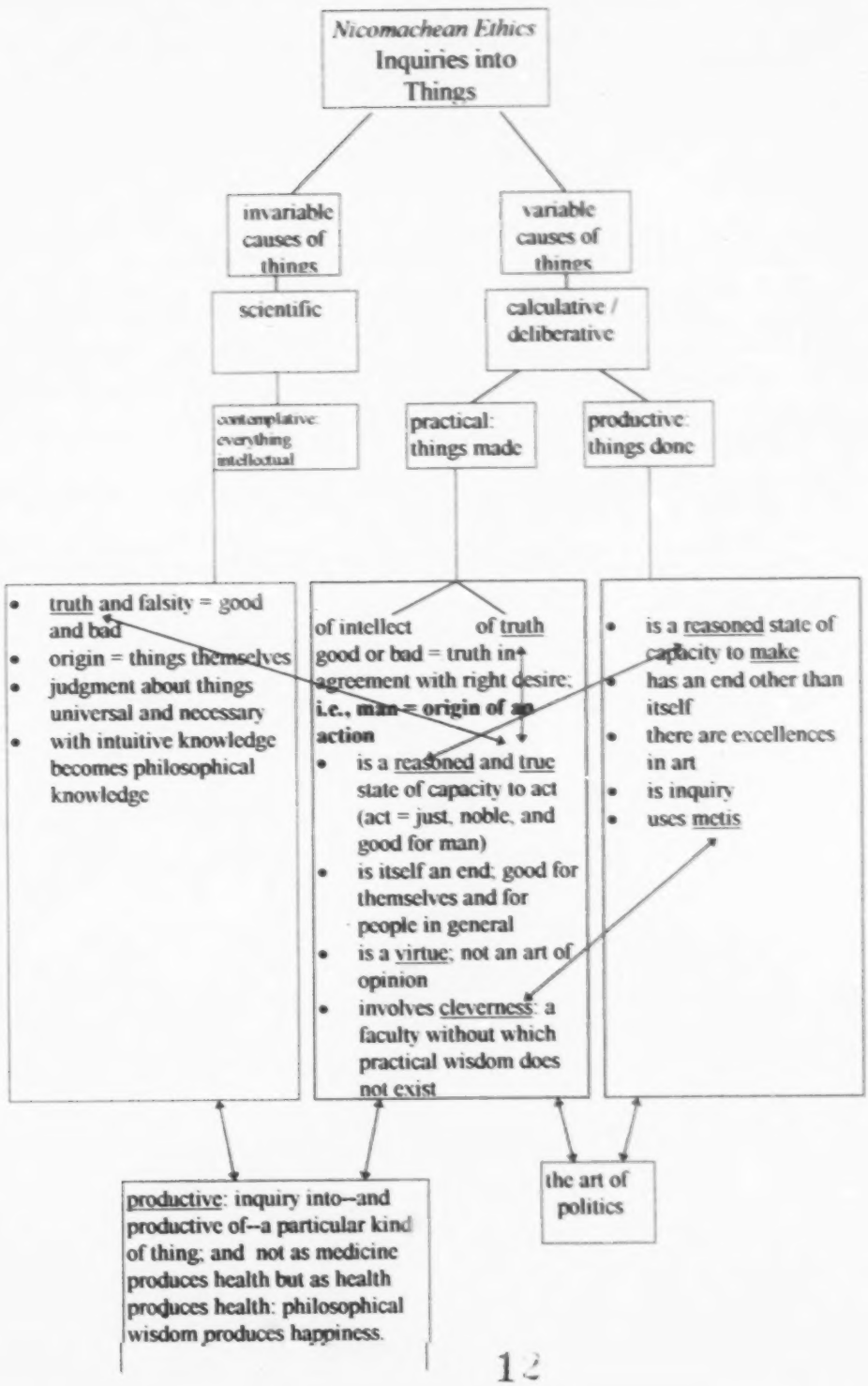
Nicomachean Ethics
Inquiries into Things
invariable causes of things
variable causes of things
scientific
calculative / deliberative
contemplative: everything intellectual
practical: things made
productive: things done
truth and falsity = good and bad
origin = things themselves
judgment about things universal and necessary
with intuitive knowledge becomes philosophical knowledge
of intellect
of truth
good or bad = truth in agreement with right desire; i.e., man = origin of an action
is a reasoned and true state of capacity to act (act = just, noble, and good for man)
is itself an end; good for themselves and for people in general
is a virtue; not an art of opinion
involves cleverness: a faculty without which practical wisdom does not exist
is a reasoned state of capacity to make
has an end other than itself
there are excellences in art
is inquiry
uses metis
productive: inquiry into--and productive of--a particular kind of thing; and not as medicine produces health but as health produces health: philosophical wisdom produces happiness.
the art of politics

ILLUSTRATION III

THE ANALECTS
CONFUCIUS

5.13: Zi Gong said, "The Master's knowledge of cultural attainments, we can hear; but the Master's knowledge of human nature or the Heavenly Way, we cannot hear." (BUT, 17.2 The natures of people are initially similar; following different practices, they grow different.)

6.22: Fan Chi asked about knowledge. The Master answered, "Serve the masses on righteous matters and pay customary respects to the Spiritual Beings but keep them at a distance. That may be considered knowledge."

11.12 Ji Lu inquired how one should serve Spiritual Beings. Confucius answered, "We are as yet not capable of serving humans; how can we be capable of serving Spirits?" The disciple went on , "May I inquire about death?" The Master replied, "We do not as yet understand life; how can we understand death?"

15.29 Man can enlarge the Way; it is not the Way that enlarges man. (BUT: 16.8: A gentleman's fear is three in number: the Mandate of Heaven, high officials, and the words of sages. AND, 17.19: Does Heaven say anything? Yet the four seasons move along and all things in nature keep growing. Does Heaven say anything?

1.3 Artful speech (Glibness) ... [is] seldom becoming of a gentleman. (5.5; 5.25; 15.27; 17.17)

1.6 Be prudent in speaking; trustworthy in words (1.7; 1.13; 11.14; 13.20; 15.6; 15.41; 16.10; 19.25)

1.14 A gentleman is ... nimble in his action but slow with his words (2.13; 4.22; 4.24; 5.10; 9.24; 12.1; 12.3; 13.27; 14.20; 14.27)

2.18 Where words seldom incite blame and acts seldom give cause for regret--therein lies (the security of) your job in the government. (8.4)

10.1 When in his native village, Confucius was sincere, as if he were not a good speaker. When in ancestral temples and at Court, he spoke fluently but prudently. (10.2; 10.4; 10.10; 10.26; 16.6; 19.9)

14.3 When politics is sober and calm, be upright in speech and in conduct; when politics is corrupt and sinister, be upright in conduct but moderate in speech.

14.4 A virtuous person must be a good speaker; a good speaker may not be a virtuous person.

16.13 Without studying the *Book of Songs*, one does not know how to speak. (17.9)

1.12 When following etiquette, one must know appropriateness. This is the finest principle in the Way of past kings. In minor and in major affairs, they were guided by it.

4.10 A gentleman's way in this world is not regulated by this or by that; it is guided by appropriateness.

6.18 When unaffectedness overcomes elegance, it is crudeness; when elegance overcomes unaffectedness, it is shallowness. When appropriate portions of affection and elegance are combined, then that is a gentleman.

7.8 In teaching, until the students cannot understand what they want to understand, until the students can hardly articulate what they want to articulate, until the students can respond with the other three corners of a room when they are taught about the one corner of a room, don't teach them.

11.4 Hui is not one who can assist me because there was nothing in what I said that did not please him.